This book is provided in digital form with the permission of the rightsholder as part of a Google project to make the world's books discoverable online.

The rightsholder has graciously given you the freedom to download all pages of this book. No additional commercial or other uses have been granted.

Please note that all copyrights remain reserved.

About Google Books

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Books helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at http://books.google.com/

VALIANT 2012

FREE COMIC BOOK DAY

FEATURING

X-O MANOWAR

8 58992 00301 7

www.valiantuniverse.com

FCBD SPECIAL

VALIANT 2012

CONTENTS

1 **X-O MANOWAR #1** SNEAK PREVIEW
Writer: Robert Venditti / Pencils: Cary Nord / Inks: Stefano Gaudiano
Colors: Moose Baumann / Letterer: Dave Lanphear

10 **HARBINGER #1** SNEAK PREVIEW
Writer: Joshua Dysart / Pencils: Khari Evans
Colors: Ian Hannin / Letterer: Rob Steen

16 **VALIANT UNIVERSE** PIN-UP
By Arturo Lozzi

18 **VALIANT VANGUARD:** HARBINGER
Interview with Joshua Dysart

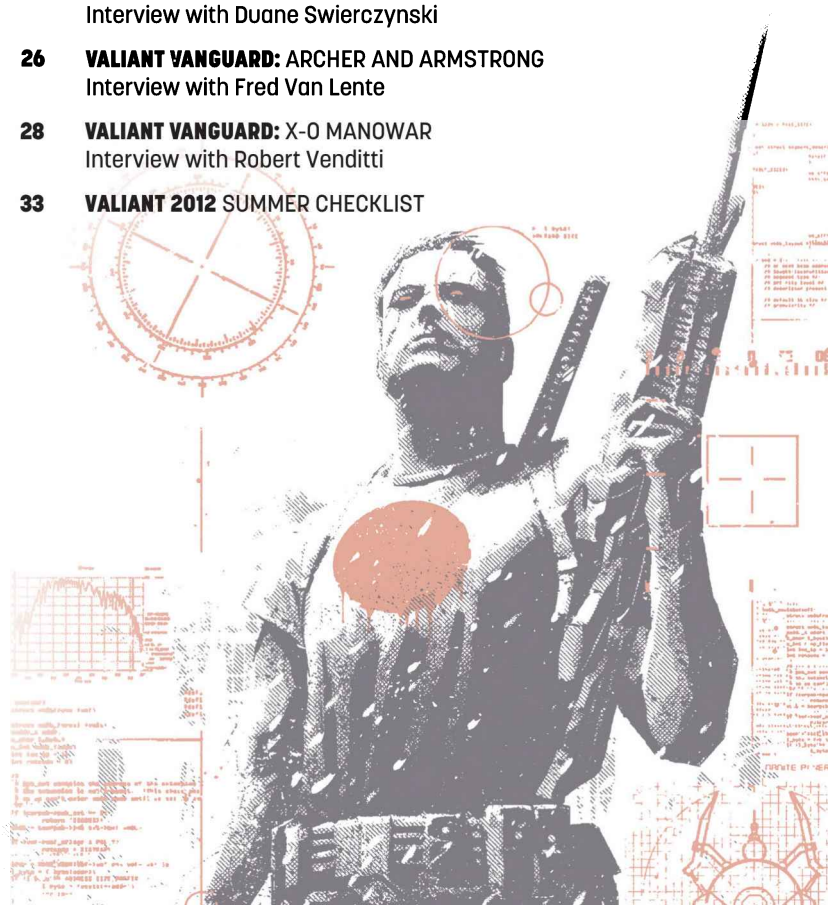
19 **BLOODSHOT DOSSIER:** FROM THE FILES OF PROJECT RISING SPIRIT
By Duane Swierczynski

24 **VALIANT VISIONARIES:** BLOODSHOT
Interview with Duane Swierczynski

26 **VALIANT VANGUARD:** ARCHER AND ARMSTRONG
Interview with Fred Van Lente

28 **VALIANT VANGUARD:** X-O MANOWAR
Interview with Robert Venditti

33 **VALIANT 2012** SUMMER CHECKLIST



Peter Cuneo
Chairman

Jason Kothari
CEO

Dinesh Shamdasani
Chief Creative Officer

Gavin Cuneo
CFO and Head of Strategic Development

Fred Pierce
Publisher

Warren Simons
VP Executive Editor

Walter Black
VP Operations

Hunter Gorinson
Marketing and Communications Manager

Atom! Freeman
Sales Manager

Rian Hughes
Logo and Trade Dress Design

Travis Escarfullery, Tom Valente, Dave Barry
Production and In-House Design

Josh Johns
Assistant Editor

Chris Robinson
Special Thanks

VALIANT COMICS FCBD 2012 SPECIAL #1

MAY 2012
Published by:
VALIANT ENTERTAINMENT LLC
Office of publication:
424 West 33rd Street,
New York, NY 10001

Copyright © 2012
Valiant Entertainment, Inc.
All rights reserved.
All characters, their distinctive likenesses and related indicia featured in this publication are trademarks of Valiant Entertainment, Inc. The stories, characters, and incidents featured in this publication are entirely fictional.

Printed in the USA.
First printing.
For more information, please visit ValiantUniverse.com

#1 SNEAK PREVIEW

VALIANT 2012

X-O MANOWAR

EXTENT OF ROMAN EMPIRE **400AD**

X-O MANOWAR

WELCOME TO X-O MANOWAR #1. WELCOME TO 402 AD.

TIMELINE

375 AD
Aric of Dacia is born

376 AD
The Huns invade Dacia.
The Visigoths migrate south.

395 AD
Alaric I becomes King of the Visigoths

▼ YOU ARE HERE

402 AD
The Battle of Pollentia:
The Visigoths vs The Romans
King Alaric I vs Flavius Stilicho

370 AD | 380 AD | 390 AD | 400 AD | 410 AD

VISIGOTHS

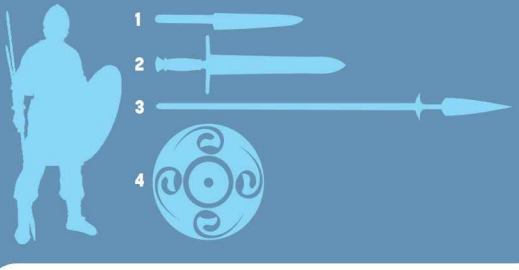
Traditionally nomadic, Visigoths lived in unwalled farming settlements positioned along major rivers on the Roman border.

Visigoth Wealth
Measured by the number of cattle owned.

Visigoth idiom
"Happiness is a good horse."

Horses were revered in Visigoth culture.
Visigoth warriors were often buried with the bodies of their horses.

Visigoth Warrior and Arms
1 Sahs (Knife)
2 Agja (Short Sword)
3 Gaizis (Wood Spear)
4 Skildus (Round Shield)

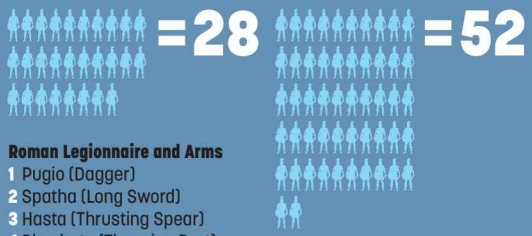


ROMANS

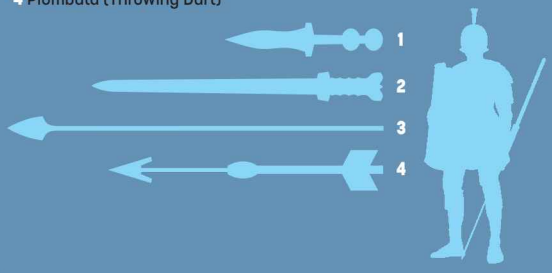
The most powerful ancient civilization on Earth, dominating Western Europe to Asia Minor. The sole superpower of the ancient world.

Roman Wealth
A wealthy man might own as many as 500 slaves.
An emperor might have more than 20,000.

Life Expectancy
Average Life Expectancy for Roman at Birth: 28 years old
Average Life Expectancy for Roman at Age 15: 52 years old

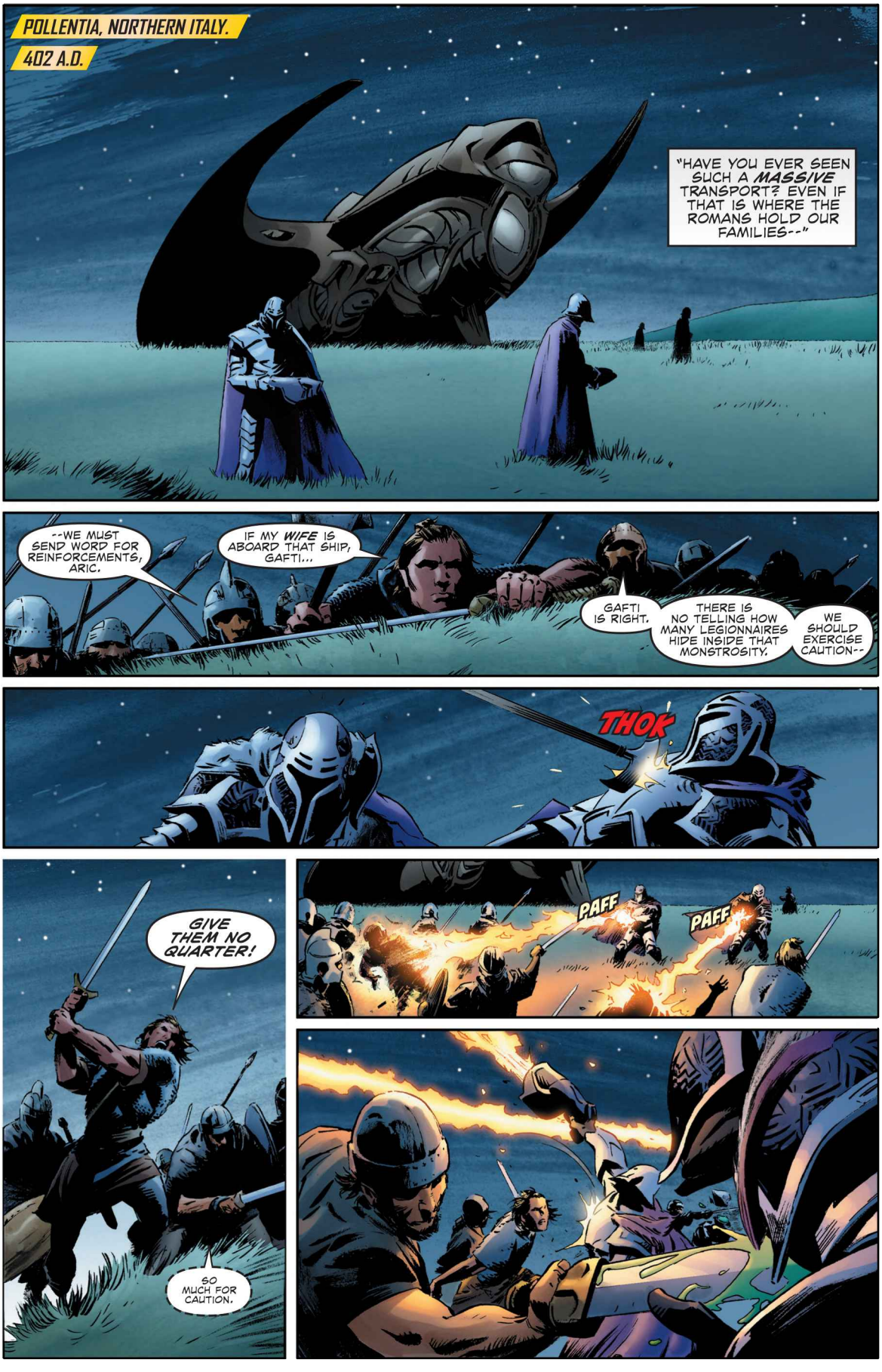


Roman Legionnaire and Arms
1 Pugio (Dagger)
2 Spatha (Long Sword)
3 Hasta (Thrusting Spear)
4 Plumbata (Throwing Dart)



PREVIOUSLY IN X-O MANOWAR: Following a crushing defeat at the hands of the Roman army, Aric of Dacia – heir to the throne of the Visigoth people – returns to camp and discovers that many of the Visigoth families have been taken captive. Among the missing is his beloved wife, Deidre. As the camp recovers from the losses, a Visigoth rider raises the alarm: Roman legionnaries approach! To protect his people – and hellbent on revenge – Aric gathers what men he can and charges out to confront the raiders. But the enemy they find is not what they expect . . .

Design: Rian Hughes

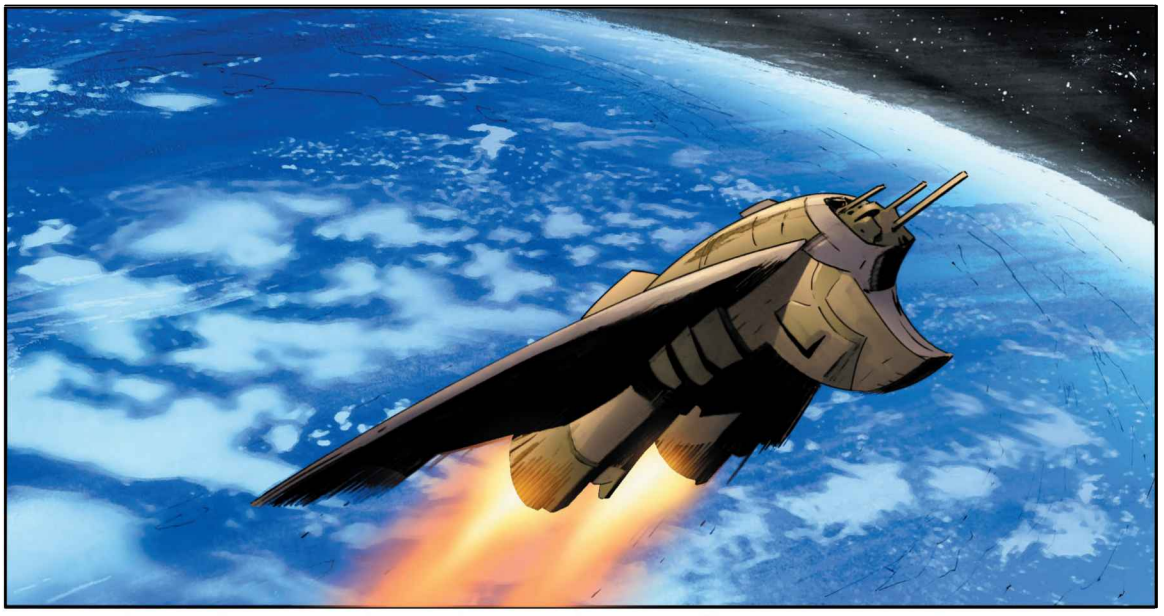

POLLENTIA, NORTHERN ITALY.
402 A.D.
"HAVE YOU EVER SEEN SUCH A MASSIVE TRANSPORT? EVEN IF THAT IS WHERE THE ROMANS HOLD OUR FAMILIES--"
--WE MUST SEND WORD FOR REINFORCEMENTS, ARIC.
IF MY WIFE IS ABOARD THAT SHIP, GAFT!...
GAFT! IS RIGHT.
THERE IS NO TELLING HOW MANY LEGIONNAIRES HIDE INSIDE THAT MONSTROSITY.
WE SHOULD EXERCISE CAUTION--
THOK
GIVE THEM NO QUARTER!
SO MUCH FOR CAUTION.
PAFF
PAFF

ROMAN SCUM.
CHKKKKK
SECURE THE AREA. PREPARE TO STORM THE TRANSPORT AND FREE THE CAPTIVES.
WHAT MANNER OF LEGIONARY DRESSES LIKE THIS...AND CARRIES SUCH WEAPONS?
DEAR GOD...!
THE ROMANS HAVE NO CRITERIA WHEN HIRING THEIR FOEDERATI. THEY WILL CONSCRIPT ALL MANNER OF MAN--AND APPARENTLY BEAST--TO DO THEIR FIGHTING FOR THEM.
CHWHRRRRRR
CH-BOOM
CH-BOOM
YOU WERE SAYING?

CHOOM
CHOOM
CHOOM
CLOSE THE DISTANCE!
MAKE THIS DAY THEIR LAST!

SMASH
IMPOSSIBLE.
WHAM
SUNFS
CRACK

(THE MISSION WAS SUCCESSFUL, COMMANDER TRILL.)
(EXCELLENT. LOAD THE SURVIVORS FOR TRANSPORT.)
(WE WILL DEPART AT ONCE.)
RUMBLL



Continued in X-O Manowar #1

Script: Robert Venditti Pencils: Cary Nord Inks: Stefano Gaudiano
Colors: Moose Bauman Letters: Dave Lanphear Assistant Editor: Josh Johns Editor: Warren Simons

THE FIRST ISSUE OF THE ALL-NEW VALIANT UNIVERSE!

X-O MANOWAR #1

DAVID AJA VARIANT COVER

ON SALE NOW

#1 SNEAK PREVIEW

2012 VALIANT

HARBINGER

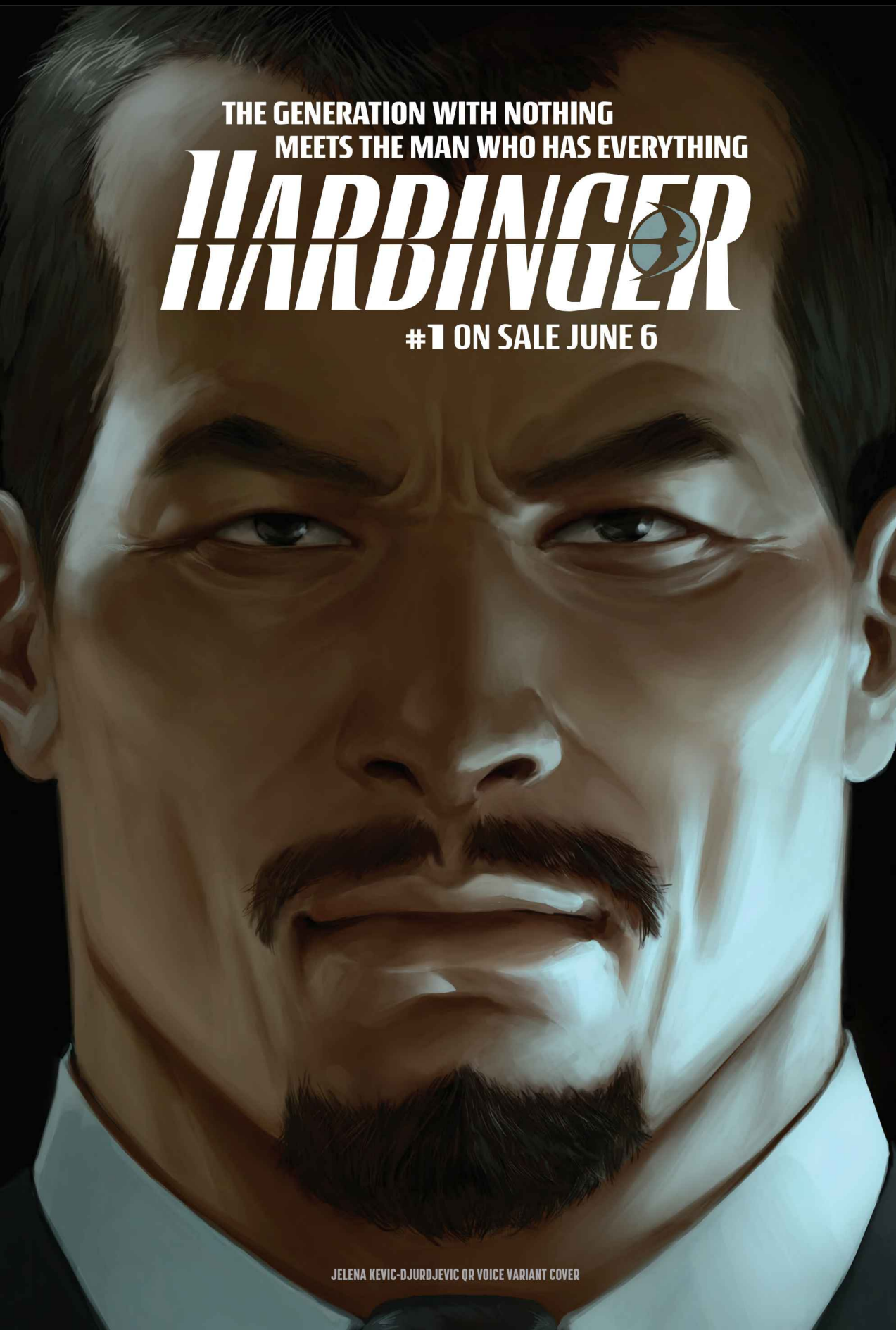
THAT FRUIT BETTER NOT BE STARIN' AT MY
LOVE HIS BLONDE HAIR SO SEXY
WAIT UNTIL YOU HAVE A KID EVERYTHING CHANGES
I'M SO WRECKED
MA YA HI MA YA HU MA YA HA MA YA HAHA
THE LONELINESS IS CRUSHING ME
PLEASE, GOD, LET HER TELL ME THAT SHE NEEDS ME
I MISS MOM
I'LL KILL THE BASTARD FOR THE INSURANCE MONEY
I'M SO IN LOVE
I WISH MY MOTHER WOULD JUST DIE SO I COULD GET ON WITH MY LIFE
EXPLOSION IN ITALY, I KNEW IT
I'M NOT GOING TO SURVIVE THE CANCER
LIFE ISN'T WORTH LIVING
WHEN IS THE LAST TIME HE SMILED AT ME?
I KNOW HE'S CHEATING ON ME
I'M NOT READY TO HAVE THIS BABY
THEY COME HERE AND THEY TAKE OUR JOBS...
OBAMA IS DESTROYING THIS COUNTRY
HE'S NOT COMING BACK
JUST ME AND THE INTERNET... ALL NIGHT LONG!
PLEASE SPEAK TO ME, GOD I MISS YOUR PRESENCE IN MY LIFE
GONNA EAT ME SOME FRENCH FRIES
LOS ASESINOS SERIALES TAMBIÉN TIENEN SENTIMIENTOS
I'M GOING TO WIN THE LOTTERY, I KNOW IT
I CAN'T BELIEVE SHE CHEATED
THEY'LL ALL LOVE THIS TWEET
SHE'S A DIRTY GIRL
FAT PIG MAKES ME SICK
LEFT HIS WIFE WITH CANCER... ANIMAL...
THREE YEARS AND NO WORK
TALK TO ME LIKE THAT
WHAT IS THIS, 1985?
I WISH I WAS PRETTY
HE'S RIGHT. PEOPLE ARE CORPORATIONS
NOBODY NOTICES ME
THAT DUDE'S SO BITTER IT'S RIDICULOUS
ELI IS A STRAIGHT THUG!
EVERY-THING'S COMING UP MILHOUSE
SO IT GOES
SEE WHO'S LAUGHING WHEN I'M GONE
DAMN GIRL YOU GOT IT GOING
THAT BABY LOOKS LIKE A MOOSE
JUST TELL HER WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER
THEY JUST NEVER CHANGE
REPORTING TO A DAMN 30-YEAR-OLD CHILD
CAN'T BELIEVE DRIVE WASN'T NOMINATED
TALK TO ME LIKE THAT BABY
FREAKING DAMN ACE ON THE RIVER
I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M GOING BALD
SHE WORKS ALL NIGHT AND THEN
NOT SURE WHETHER I LIKE GIRLS OR NOT
TASTES LIKE HONEY
THIS KID MUST BE HIGH
DON'T THROW YOUR HAND
JUST NEED TO HANG ON
WANT BOTOX BUT IT'S SOOOO EXPENSIVE
BURN THOSE RICH $*#(*
CAN TELL THAT THEY HATE ME
TOTALLY GOING TO KILL HER
I MISS CHAPPELLE
WE CAN'T STOP KILLING THINGS
TEBOW!!!
A QUIEN DIOS AMA, LE LLAMA.

1951. SOUTHERN TIBET.
AFTER THE CHINESE INVASION OF THE NORTHEAST.
FLYING NEST HERMITAGE.
FOUND ON NO KNOWN MAP.
RROOOAN

〈FIRE!〉
TOYO HARADA.
18 YEARS OLD.
〈PROTECT ME FROM YOURSELVES.〉
〈W-WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? KILL HIM!〉
KACK

WELCOME, HARADA TOYO.
〈YOU...YOU'RE REAL...I DREAMED OF YOU...THE BLEEDING MONK WHO DOES NOT DIE. I CAME ALL THIS WAY, THOUGH I DIDN'T KNOW IF...I DIDN'T KNOW...〉
IT IS NOT FOR ME TO SPEAK ON WHAT IS REAL.
〈BUT YOU SAW MY COMING? YOU CAN SEE MY FUTURE?〉
YES, HARBINGER... I SEE YOUR FUTURE...

"IT IS AN UNASSUMING WIND... WAITING TO BE WHIPPED INTO A STORM."
PETER STANCHEK
18 YEARS OLD
PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA.
NOW.
HE'S A LIAR! I TOLD HIM... I TOLD HIM I WAS A NICE GIRL...
Help please GOD BLESS YOU
I'LL KILL THE BASTARD FOR THE INSURANCE MONEY.
JUST ME AND THE INTERNET... ALL NIGHT LONG!
DAMN DEMOCRATS ARE DESTROYING THIS COUNTRY.
LOS ASESINOS SERIALES TAMBIÉN TIENEN SENTIMIENTOS.
I WOULD BE SO HAPPY IF I ONLY HAD THOSE SHOES!
SO I HAD A LITTLE TOO MUCH TO DRINK. WHO CARES? HE'S SUCH A JERK.
I WISH MY MOTHER WOULD JUST DIE SO I COULD GET ON WITH MY LIFE.
I'M SO IN LOVE.
I'M NOT READY TO HAVE THIS BABY.
OK $1900 MINUS RENT, THAT'S $550...
WHAT AM I FORGETTING?
TOILET PAPER, COFFEE AND MOTRIN. TOILET PAPER, COFFEE, MOTRIN...
WHEN IS THE LAST TIME HE SMILED AT ME?
DON'T FORGET TO CALL MOM
PLEASE GOD, LET HER TELL ME THAT SHE NEEDS ME.
MAYBE I'M ALLERGIC TO SOY OR GLUTEN, OMIGOD MAYBE BOTH!
SO YOU MISSED 1 BIRTH CONTROL PILL. STOP WORRYING.
THEY COME HERE AND THEY TAKE OUR JOBS...
I'M NOT GOING TO SURVIVE THE CANCER.
WHY DO I ALWAYS DO THAT? I'M SO STUPID!
LONELINESS IS KILLING ME
I WISH I WAS PRETTY.
IF HE HASN'T CALLED BY TONIGHT, I SHOULD TEXT HIM, BUT IF I TEXT...
LIFE ISN'T WORTH LIVING.
I KNOW HE'S CHEATING ON ME.
TO BE CONTINUED IN HARBINGER #1!
WRITER: Joshua Dysart · ART: Khari Evans
COLOR ART: Ian Hannin · LETTERER: Rob Steen
ASSISTANT EDITOR: Josh Johns EDITOR: Warren Simons


THE GENERATION WITH NOTHING
MEETS THE MAN WHO HAS EVERYTHING
HARBINGER
#1 ON SALE JUNE 6
JELENA KEVIC-DJURDJEVIC QR VOICE VARIANT COVER

VALIANT

UNIVERSE

2012 VALIANT HARBINGER

Joshua Dysart talks Teenage Renegades, Extreme Psionics and other Things to Come

For those out there who might not already know, what is a "harbinger" and what significance does that word hold within the series?

JD: The word "harbinger" refers to a person or thing that announces or signals the approach of another. In our series we use the word as the name of a secret education program for people born with extreme psionic abilities. A place where they can learn to keep their own powers from driving them mad, a real danger when the mind is so open and freely wandering. But also, we use the word in another way. As part of the fabric of the mystery at the heart of the series. There is, unquestionably, something coming. An unknown global fate is rising darkly in our very near future, and its nature is obscured to even the greatest living psionic pre-cogs. Who or what is the exact cause of this change, no one is really sure. But a harbinger will rise, make no mistake. Someone or something that is the very embodiment of the coming change. A road sign for us all.

As we'll soon discover, Pete Stanchek is a far from a normal teenager. What are his circumstances like when we first meet him in this series?

JD: Even among these rare human beings, Peter is himself a rarity of outlandish potential. But without someone to guide him, a proper father figure who understands what he's going through in his stormy mind, things are tough. As a child he held great power, and as The Twilight Zone tells us, a child with power is a dangerous thing. By the time we catch up to Peter, he's 18 years old and already an escapee from a mental institution where his mother abandoned him. He's essentially homeless and has managed to neuter his own psionic abilities, doing little more than walking around pulling the Jedi mind trick on people just to get by.

Of course, the other great force at the heart of Harbinger is Toyo Harada. What can you tell us about this enigmatic philanthropist and his life's work?

JD: Harada is a different fish all together. Harada is the man with everything. There is the public face of Harada and the private face of Harada. Publicly he is an incredibly powerful and altruistic businessman who is known all over the world. Privately he's the man behind the Harbinger Education Program. Like, Peter, Toyo represents a spike in human brain evolution, he possesses extreme psionic abilities, and for the last 60 years he has been collecting others like himself... though no one is quite as powerful. Harada sees himself as the moderator and keeper of this mysterious coming change we talked about. He sees himself as a harbinger. He unquestionably has humanity's best interest at heart, so every move he makes, he makes for the greater good. And yet... well, we'll just have to see how that all shakes out.

By now, we will have seen a few glimpses of the other Harbingers Pete and Harada will eventually discover during the course of the series. What character are you most looking forward to fleshing out during the course of your story?

JD: I really dig coming up with new Harbingers. I could do it all day long. For me it's the greatest thing about doing a book like this. Our Harbingers are not like traditional super-heroes. They're dark and weird and straight-up awesome. The constant life of extreme psionic powers makes these people complete aberrations, either psychologically or physically or both. Right now, my favorites are a monk who bleeds perpetually from a never healing wound but does not die and a child who projects images from your past back at you the same way that Ryan Gosling projects pheromones. Then of course I'm really looking forward to fleshing out Peter's own team. I think old school fans will dig just how true to the original "Pete's Renegades" we are, even as we tweak them into new territory as characters.

Pete, being of a rebellious and impulsive age, seems to be an ideal foil for a figurehead of the establishment like Harada. What are the fundamental differences between these two men that would see them divide the world, rather than share it?

JD: Hubris my friend. Peter's from the "nothing" generation. That generation has been screwed out of just about everything society promised them by the solipsistic, greedy generations that came before. Peter's broken and lost and not really equipped in any way to buy into the rhetoric of civilized society. But Harada knows this. He knows that his own generation screwed everything to hell, and he wants to fix it. However, Harada operates from a place of buried pride. He's too certain of his future as the one who saves us all. Too eager to carry our collective heavy load. He will make extreme, drastic decisions for the "common good" that will push Peter away. And this will cause a chain reaction of violence between the two that will threaten everything. Maybe the harbinger of the title is their conflict... hmmm.

One of the strengths of a book like Harbinger is its extensive ensemble cast. What's it like taking on a story that includes so many important players?

JD: In all my work I build a distinct cast because I love to write all kinds of people. The thing is, I'm really not much of an escapist. My favorite type of narrative is non-fiction. My favorite films are human-centric docs. I love people. I love the human condition. I love loving the worst in us. I think we're fascinating, and I think, without me having much of a choice in the matter, that comes out in the work. ■

PROJECT RISING SPIRIT

SECRET//COMINT

THE FOLLOWING PAGES DETAIL A CLASSIFIED OPERATION IN [REDACTED], AFGHANISTAN, AS WELL AS A SEEMINGLY RELATED, THOUGH AT THIS TIME UNEXPLAINED, INCIDENT IN [REDACTED] NEVADA THAT TOOK PLACE 0600 HOURS JULY 5, [REDACTED]. BY OPENING THIS DOSSIER YOU ARE OBLIGATED TO PROTECT SUCH CLASSIFIED INFORMATION PURSUANT TO ALL APPLICABLE LAWS. UNAUTHORIZED DISCLOSURE WILL BE CONSIDERED AN ACT OF TREASON AND PUNISHABLE TO THE FULLEST EXTENT OF MILITARY LAW. THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION AND YOUR VIGILANCE TO THESE RESPONSIBILITIES.

CLASSIFIED
TOP-SECRET
EYES ONLY

EMPLOYEE DOSSIER

PAGE ONE

1/ We open in Afghanistan, from the POV of a predator drone high above the desert floor. It's dusk. A military light truck barrels across a sand-swept road.

1 CAP

Afghanistan.

2 CAP (MISSION CONTROL)

Roger that, enemy vehicle moving southbound, approaching [redacted]

3 CAP (PILOT)

Copy that, Jaguar.

2/ Cut to the Predator drone speeding through the sky.

4 CAP (PILOT)

Eyes on target. Missile power **on** and-

3/ We cut to the drone PILOT, who is 8,000 miles away in Nevada. He's a very young guy in a helmet, and he's sitting next to his SENSOR OPERATOR. Both are sitting in a machine that looks like a late 80s two-player arcade game with three screens in front of them: the drone's POV, technical data, and a navigation map (like a GPS).

5 CAP

Near [redacted] Nevada.

6 PILOT

Whoah.

4/ Predator POV: we push in to see the truck pass by a slim figure standing on the side of the road.

7 CAP (PILOT)

What the hell's that **kid** doing out there?

PAGE TWO

1/ Tight on the pilot's worried face.

1 PILOT

Are you seeing this, Jaguar? We've got what appears to be an adolescent on the road...

2/ Predator POV: an even closer view of the GIRL -- dark hair, 13 years old, willowy, vulnerable. She's staring right at us, showing us her palms.

2 CAP (PILOT)
Oh hell it's [redacted]! for

3 CAP (PILOT)
Powering down miss-

3/ Cut back to the pilot as he's electrocuted in his chair, the entire machinery around him jumping with bright yellow, jagged currents and bolts of energy.

4 PILOT
YGGGGGAHHHHH!

4/ We cut to the outside of the facility -- which is revealed to be a converted double-wide trailer on a military base. The trailer is being ravaged by the same kind of electrical field. Sparks are bursting. The whole trailer is rocking on its wheels.

5/ Small panel as the Predator flips and falls out of the sky.

5 CAP (BLOODSHOT)
"I told you [redacted] I'm out."

PAGE THREE

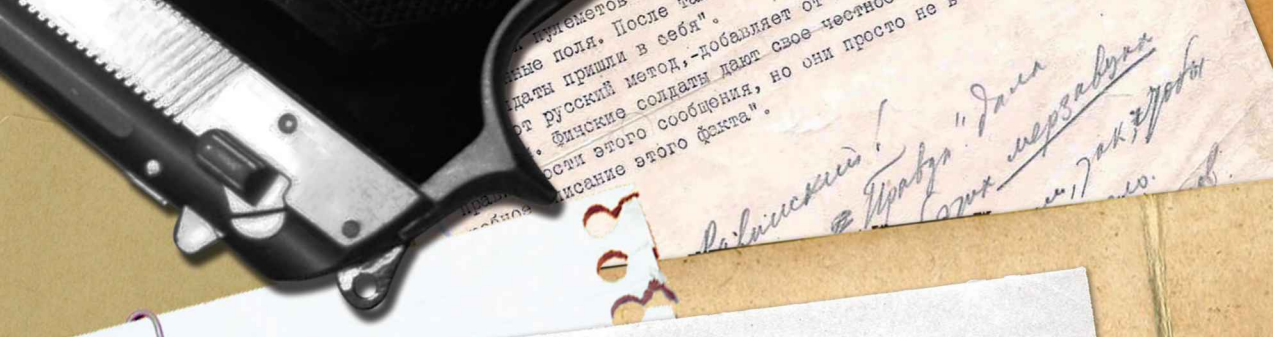
1/ Cut to BLOODSHOT, in civilian clothes, sitting in a spartan military office. Boots up on the desk. Toothpick in his mouth. Leather jacket. Very handsome, if rugged, guy. [redacted]

1 BLOODSHOT
And you know exactly **why.**

2 BLOODSHOT
Now we gonna go have that porterhouse you promised, or do I have to **beat you to death** with the stump of your own arm?

2/ On [redacted], behind his desk. Older. Fatherly. Graying around the temples. Once a fierce soldier, now a little soft.

[redacted]
How are Ashley and John, anyway? What's John in? Third...?



3/ We pull back to reveal Bloodshot and [redacted] is pulling a photo from a folder stamped [redacted]

4 BLOODSHOT
Fourth grade. See, that's how long you've owed me that steak, jackass.

5 MINDER
Ray, I promised myself I wouldn't do this, because I respect your wishes, and most of all, I respect your **family.**

6 MINDER
But it's [redacted]

4/ We see the PHOTO in Bloodshot's hand. It's a surveillance photo of a camp in [redacted]

7 MINDER
A Predator picked up on a base close to [redacted] The satellites **missed it.** There was something cloaking it.

5/ Tight on Bloodshot's eyes, which are full of anger. [redacted]. There are dark circles under them.

8 [redacted](O.S.)
Intelligence thinks he's being **held** there.

PAGE FOUR
1/ Cut to Bloodshot reaching for his beautiful wife, ASHLEY, who's just pulled away from him. Tears are filling her eyes.

1 BLOODSHOT
Ash, it's just **recon work.** A favor for an old friend. One of my **oldest** friends.

2 BLOODSHOT
I swear, I won't be anywhere near the field.

2/ Meanwhile, his young son JOHN tugs on his jacket. Looks up at his Dad.

3 JOHN
Dad, you'll be back in time for the fall festival, right? You said you'd [redacted]

3/ Bloodshot pulls his wife close to him. She's starting to come around, smiling a little.

4 ASHLEY
Nowhere near the field, Ray? You **promise?**

5 BLOODSHOT
Cross my heart.

PAGE FIVE

1/ Cut to airspace over Afghanistan as Bloodshot, in parachuting gear, plummets through the air. He talks to Minder on the coms as he falls.

[redacted]

1 BLOODSHOT
You still owe me that **steak,** [redacted]

2 [redacted]
Hey. Get [redacted] out alive, and I'll throw in a **shrimp cocktail.**

PAGE SIX

1/ New angle as Bloodshot falls. We see the trail of a FIM-92 stinger missile in the background, headed right for Bloodshot.

1 BLOODSHOT
Hey, you wanna know what the boy did to me?

2 MINDER
What's that, **tough guy**?

3 BLOODSHOT
Signed me up for [redacted]

2/ Big panel: the missile explodes just a few feet away from Bloodshot, who's rocked by the blast and catches fire... along with his chute.

4 SFX

THROOOM

2012 VALIANT BLOODSHOT

Duane Swierczynski redefines the Man from Rising Spirit

You have well-established credentials as both a novelist and comics writer. What made Bloodshot - and by extension, the Valiant Universe - a project that you gravitated toward?

DS: It all started, as these things tend to do, with a beer.

Okay, maybe it started a few weeks before the beer, but I remember the beer the most, because it was over a few beers at San Diego Comic Con that editor Warren Simons and I really started to dig around Bloodshot's history to see what made him tick. I'd written a few titles for Warren during his time at Marvel - he was the editor who brought me aboard, in fact – and I was excited by the idea of working with him again. But once we really started talking about who Bloodshot is, and was, and what he might want now... well, my brain just went into overdrive. He's my favorite kind of noir hero: tortured, yet determined to do the right thing, no matter what kind of horrible things he may (or may not) have done in the past. I'll admit that I missed the original series back in the day, but once I caught up and saw the creative possibilities, Warren would've had to put a bullet in my head to get me to back off.

By his very nature, Bloodshot is an amorphous character, someone who - at least at first - lacks a distinct personality. How do you get inside the head of a man who doesn't even know who he is?

DS: See, that's the best time to jump into someone's head – when he's trying to figure it all out, too. Both the reader and the hero are starting at the beginning. I love amnesia stories, unreliable narrator stories, missing time stories, paranoia stories... so it's been great fun to blend all of these flavors in a balls-out, stomp-the-accelerator action-adventure saga. Bloodshot is like a blend of The Bourne Identity and Robocop with plenty of Memento and Commando in there, too.

In his original incarnation, Bloodshot had an array of abilities - rapid healing, enhanced strength, and communication with machines. Have you toyed with his power set at all and perhaps added something new to his arsenal?

DS: Oh yeah. You'll see new trick or two in the first issue. Nanomachine technology has come a lonnnnng way in the 20 years since Bloodshot first appeared... Also: Bloodshot can still communicate with machines. But he's stuck with a dial-up connection. (Kidding! Maybe.)

Although he's ostensibly a super-hero, Bloodshot also bumps up a lot against a lot of other genres - science fiction, war and mystery just to name a few. What is your perspective on the unique space that Bloodshot occupies in the Valiant Universe?

DS: I have the most fun with stories that mash together genres like a monster truck rally. As for the Bloodshot's place in the Valiant Universe, I'd say that if you like surprises, violence, noir and crazy science that might make your brain hurt... then this is your comic.

From the get-go, readers will see that Bloodshot's keepers in Project Rising Spirit have less than noble intentions. Will they be the series' primary antagonists? And will we see their machinations spill over into the Valiant Universe at large?

DS: Well, that's the funny thing about villains. They never think they're the bad guys, do they? Project Rising Spirit is the tip of the spear - the U.S. government's secret weapon they bring out when circumstances are dire enough. Sometimes their missions are noble, and for the good of the country. Sometimes... eh, not so much. Just like in real life. But rest assured: PRS is very much plugged into the rest of the Valiant Universe. I can't say anything else right now without ruining some of the surprises we have in the very first issue...

Technology and its impact on modern warfare is obviously a running thread throughout this series. What developments in the real world have influenced your take on Bloodshot?

DS: P.W. Singer's Wired for War was a big touch point for me – I'm happy Warren turned me on to this book, which is all about the thrilling and scary world of robotic warfare. It's more than strange to grow up watching movies like Terminator and Robocop and start to see reality edge closer and closer to these allegedly science-fictional worlds. I was also inspired by a news story this past December, when the Iranian government claimed to have shot down a next-generation experimental U.S. drone and proudly displayed photos of it. I thought to myself, what if it wasn't just a drone? What if they shot down something even more super-secret?

Bloodshot is not just a gun-for-hire or an armed vigilante. What is his ultimate mission and where will it take him as a character?

DS: Well, I'd hate to say something horribly pretentious like, "This is one's man violent and dangerous quest for his own identity..." But the thing is, that's exactly it. Bloodshot has no frickin' idea who he is. He has many, many (many) memories in his head - memories of being a guy named Angelo Mortalli, as well as a guy named Ray Garrison... but who is he beneath all of that? Is he just a living weapon who's been running so hot that it burned away most of his soul? Does a guy like that have a chance for redemption, even if he does find the answers he's seeking?

Also: it will end, as these things tend to do, with Bloodshot having a beer. ■

LEARN THE TRUTH IN
BLOODSHOT
#1 ON SALE JULY 11

2012

VALIANT

ARCHER + ARMSTRONG

Fred Van Lente collides Prodigal Son against Original Sinner

What drew you to Archer and Armstrong? And what makes them a compelling duo in you eyes?

FVL: Barry Windsor-Smith's original Archer and Armstrong series contains all of my favorite things: great characters, globe-trotting action, and a dark conspiracy spanning centuries. At its core are a classic mismatched buddy team of a lethal innocent and an invulnerable cynic.

Armstrong's backstory is pretty easy to sum up - he's an immortal who has spent the past few centuries drinking everything he can get his hands on. Archer, however, is a little more complex. What can you tell us about who he is and where he comes from?

FVL: Obadiah Archer is a special person, something his parents, megachurch pastor Joe Archer and Congresswoman Thelma Archer, recognize when he's fairly young. Any physical skill Archer can see, he can do - from Brazilian ninjutsu to lockpicking to krumping to julienning a carrot. As a result he is the greatest martial artist in the Valiant Universe, trained for one purpose - to kill whom his parents claim is the Great Satan, a man who has walked the Earth since the time of Gilgamesh and seen and done everything (and everyone). The Sect that the Archers belong to believe that only when this immortal finally dies can Heaven on Earth be brought about. Currently, this immortal calls himself Armstrong.

What kind of dynamic are you hoping to develop between Archer and Armstrong? Are they partners? Teacher and student? Kindred spirits?

FVL: At first, they're assassin and target. But Archer and Armstrong share an important trait, and that's their essential good nature. Armstrong realizes that what the Sect is really up to is to bring about the End Times; and Archer realizes that much of what he's been raised to believe is a lie, and so they team up to stop a second apocalypse from coming about.

In the original series, Armstrong's satchel contained some of most sought after items in the Valiant Universe. Will we see any of those same secret relics come into play again?

FVL: Most definitely. In fact, you could say they're one of the keys to the series. There is a secret to Armstrong's immortality, which will take Archer and Armstrong on a world-trotting adventure to Rome, Jerusalem, distant parts of China, India, and more. If they fail, the Sect will bring about an unimaginable cataclysm - what most cultures call "The Great Flood," but in fact was a technologically based cataclysm that wiped out the advanced civilization that predates our current history.

Archer and Armstrong isn't just a super-hero series, but contains elements of family drama, historical adventure, and mythology as well. Where do you see their story fitting into the larger scheme of the Valiant Universe?

FVL: It's incredibly crucial, and lays a lot of the groundwork for what's going on elsewhere in the universe. We're building the Valiant Universe very deliberately, very carefully, so we aren't tripping over each other's feet right out of the gate. While every title is interconnected, there's firewalls between each to keep every title distinct. Archer and Armstrong is both the buddy book and the high adventure book, the one that really explores the secret history behind the Valiant Universe. Archer and Armstrong's quest is in the tradition of Assassin's Creed or Da Vinci Code - heroes following clues and riddles to uncover how the millennia-old struggle between Armstrong and the Sect had influenced the most important events and people in history - and what's going on across the Valiant Universe right now. (Since Armstrong has been drunk for most of the past few centuries, he doesn't quite remember a lot of this stuff on his own...)

Both Archer and Armstrong have some rather colorful family members. Will we see any of their famous brothers or sisters debut your first arc on the series?

FVL: Longtime Valiant fans know that Armstrong's two brothers were important heroes in their own right; they're important parts of this revamp as well, but to explain in exactly what capacity would be giving too much away.

You're well known for bringing a unique blend of action and comedy to your work. What kind of tone are you aiming for with Archer and Armstrong series?

FVL: Fans of titles I've done across town like Incredible Hercules, Marvel Zombies and Taskmaster will see a lot to like here. Armstrong has been battling the various insane incarnations of the Sect for thousands of years, and he's drunk with, battled with, and slept with many major historical figures (and sometimes all three) and a lot of the fun here is going back and seeing those scenes. But the main focus here is action and adventure - and we'll be daring you, the reader, to come up with the answers to the clues and puzzles Archer and Armstrong encounter along their quest.

Archer and Armstrong are perhaps most well known for Barry Windsor-Smith's interpretation of the characters. Has his depiction of the characters influenced your take on them?

FVL: Very much so. Those first twelve-plus issues of Archer and Armstrong were some of the best comics of the 1990s. If we can achieve that same level of quality with this series, then all of my hopes for this book will have been realized. ■

VALIANT 2012

ARCHER AND ARMSTRONG

AUGUST 2012

2012 VALIANT

X-O MANOWAR

Robert Venditti brings Valiant's alien-armored Visigoth into the 21st Century

Aric of Dacia is a man thrown through time and space, fighting a war centuries removed from his own. How do you get inside the head of a Visigoth warrior? And how does he react to the modern day?

RV: For nearly his entire life, Aric's people have been migrating throughout Europe in wagons, searching for a permanent home. That upbringing would have a huge impact on someone's worldview. Of course, the great tragedy for Aric is when he escapes from his alien captors and returns to Earth, 1600 years have passed. He's in possession of the X-O Manowar armor, the most formidable weapon in the universe, but he can't use it to help his people because his people are gone. How he deals with that will be one of the series' main undercurrents.

Aric's journey through time and struggle for freedom is unique to the Valiant Universe. What are the primary themes you've tried to touch upon with this story?

RV: The extent to which technology can be a double-edged sword; the difference between knowledge and experience; individuality vs. groupthink; isolation; faith; and whether any one species has the right to survive over another. That should be enough to get me through the first year.

X-O Manowar marks your first collaboration with legendary artist Cary Nord. How has his work affected your vision for this series?

RV: I knew from the moment I started reading about the character that the concept was ideal for telling stories over a backdrop of epic action. Once I learned Cary was coming on board, I became even more cognizant of that fact. Cary has an amazing skill set, though, and I wanted to see him draw other things, too. I wrote a scene into issue two– to say what it is would be a spoiler– just so I could see him draw it.

The man under the X-O Manowar armor, Aric of Dacia, is many things– cunning strategist, fearless solider, man out of time. Which aspect of Aric's character appeals to you the most?

RV: Definitely the latter. Aric leaves the world in the 5th century, and when he returns he finds it to be a much different place. Time travel aside, what lies at the heart of this story is a sense of alienation. How does the last member of a bygone culture fit into the modern day? Whether it's changing jobs or switching schools or moving to a new neighborhood, I think everyone has felt a sense of alienation at some point. I certainly have.

By now, most will have seen some glimpses of The Vine, the alien race responsible for the creation of the Manowar armor. What can you tell us about the role they play in the series?

RV: The plant-worshiping Vine will be a recurring antagonist for Aric. Why they visited Earth in Aric's day, the impetus for their return in the present, and the reason they want the Manowar armor back so desperately are all central to Aric's story.

You've received a number of accolades for your work on your original graphic novels, The Surrogates and The Homeland Directive. What has been the biggest challenge in transitioning to an ongoing, monthly series?

RV: My creator-owned work is much smaller in scale, which makes it easier to know what the entire story is– beginning, middle, and end– before I start writing. With an ongoing, the storytelling is by necessity more open-ended. You have to think more in terms of individual arcs. Luckily, X-O Manowar is a concept that lends itself to endless plotlines. It seems every day another one occurs to me. I just thought of a new one as I was typing this. Seriously.

There are thousands of fans of the original X-O Manowar series eagerly anticipating issue #1. How much have the classic Valiant books influenced your interpretation of X-O Manowar?

RV: The original run is the bedrock on which the new series will be built. That isn't to say there won't be any new characters, themes, or plotlines, though. There will be plenty of those. But readers will always be able to find the elements that have allowed X-O Manowar to withstand the test of time.

X-O Manowar is just the first step in rebuilding and reinventing the Valiant Universe. Can we expect X-O Manowar to deliver any hints about the future of the Valiant Universe or its other characters?

RV: One of aspects that made the original Valiant line so successful was its interconnectedness. That's going to be true of the new books as well. The events unfolding within the pages of X-O Manowar will have huge implications throughout the entire universe. Aric will be encountering more than a few familiar Valiant faces – heroes and villains. ■

VALIANT 2012

ETERNAL WARRIOR

WINTER 2012

EVERYONE DESERVES A GOLDEN AGE

The Hero Initiative creates a financial safety net for comic creators who may need emergency medical aid, financial support for essentials of life, and an avenue back into paying work. Since inception, the Hero Initiative has been fortunate enough to benefit over 50 creators and their families with over $500,000 worth of much-needed aid, fueled by your contributions! It's a chance for all of us to give back something to the people who have given us so much enjoyment.

HELPING COMIC CREATORS IN NEED

HERO INITIATIVE

FIND OUT MORE, VOLUNTEER, DONATE AT HEROINITIATIVE.ORG

VALIANT 2012

RAI

SPRING 2013

#VALIANT2012

VALIANTUNIVERSE.com

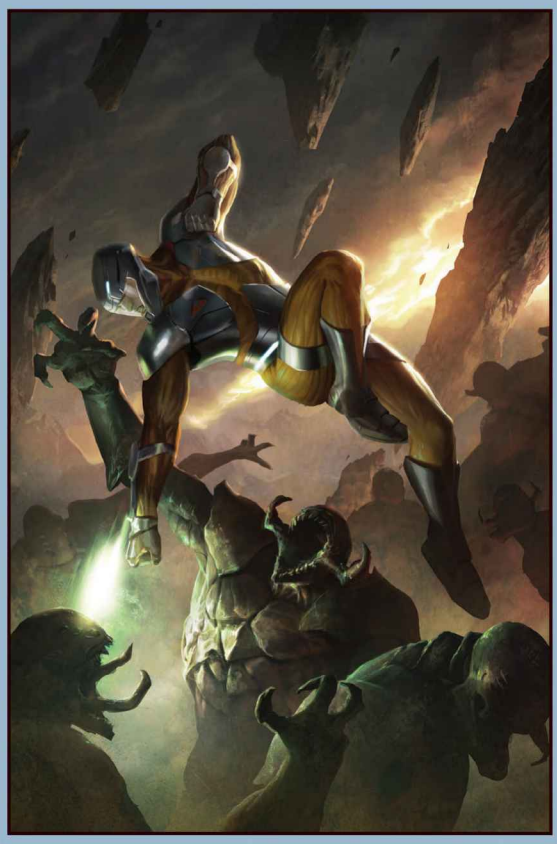
facebook.com/ValiantComics

twitter.com/ValiantComics

VALIANT 2012 SUMMER CHECKLIST

BLOODSHOT #1

X-O MANOWAR #2



MAY

- [ ] X-O MANOWAR #1
- [ ] VALIANT FCBD 2012 SPECIAL #1

JUNE

- [ ] HARBINGER #1
- [ ] X-O MANOWAR #2

JULY

- [ ] BLOODSHOT #1
- [ ] HARBINGER #2
- [ ] X-O MANOWAR #3

AUGUST

- [ ] ARCHER & ARMSTRONG #1
- [ ] BLOODSHOT #2
- [ ] HARBINGER #3
- [ ] X-O MANOWAR #4

VALIANT
2012
#1 ON SALE NOW
X-O
MANOWAR
#1 ON SALE JUNE 6
HARBINGER